

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A stain-proofing agent comprising a polymer dissolved or dispersed in water, which polymer contains at least one repeating unit (A1) having at least two hydroxyl groups and, if necessary, contains optionally a repeating unit (B1) other than the repeating unit (A1), wherein the content (by mass) of the repeating unit (A1) is more than 10% based on the polymer, and wherein the repeating unit (A1) is selected from the group consisting of $\text{CH}_2=\text{CHCOOR}^1$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)\text{COOR}^1$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{CHOCOR}^1$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)\text{OCOR}^1$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{CHOR}^1$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)\text{OR}^1$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{CHCH}_2\text{OR}^1$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{CHCH}_2\text{OCOR}^1$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{CHCONHR}^1$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)\text{CONHR}^1$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{CHCON}(\text{R}^1)_2$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)\text{CON}(\text{R}^1)_2$, $\text{CH}_2=\text{CHNHCOR}^1$, and $\text{CH}_2=\text{C}(\text{CH}_3)\text{NHCOR}^1$, wherein R^1 is an organic group having at least two hydroxyl groups, and optionally other functional groups, or nitrogen, chlorine or fluorine atoms, and wherein when two R^1 are contained, they may be the same or different.

Claim 2 (Original): The stain-proofing agent according to Claim 1, wherein at least one type of the repeating unit (B1) is a repeating unit (b1) having a crosslinkable functional group.

Claim 3 (Original): The stain-proofing agent according to Claim 1, wherein the octane removal work calculated from the contact angle of octane in water, of a coating film formed from the stain-proofing agent, is less than 3.0×10^{-2} J/m².

Claim 4 (Withdrawn): A coating composition comprising a coating resin and the stain-proofing agent as defined in Claim 1.

Claim 5 (Withdrawn): The coating composition according to Claim 4, wherein the coating resin is a fluororesin.

Claim 6 (Withdrawn): The coating composition according to Claim 4, which further contains a crosslinking agent capable of crosslinking the stain-proofing agent.

Claim 7 (Withdrawn): A coated article having a coating film formed by using the coating composition as defined in Claim 4.

Claim 8 (Withdrawn): A stain-proofing agent comprising a polymer which contains at least two repeating units (A2) having hydroxymethyl groups and, if necessary, contains a repeating unit (B2) other than the repeating units (A2), wherein the content (by mass) of the repeating units (A2) is more than 30%.

Claim 9 (Withdrawn): The stain-proofing agent according to Claim 8, wherein at least one type of the repeating unit (B2) is a repeating unit (b1) having a crosslinkable functional group.

Claim 10 (Withdrawn): The stain-proofing agent according to Claim 8, wherein the hydroxymethyl groups in the repeating units (A2) are bonded to nitrogen atoms.

Claim 11 (Withdrawn): The stain-proofing agent according to Claim 8, wherein the repeating units (A2) are repeating units obtained from at least one monomer selected from the

group consisting of N-hydroxymethylacrylamide, N-hydroxymethylmethacrylamide, N,N-bis(hydroxymethyl)acrylamide and N,N-bis(hydroxymethyl)methacrylamide.

Claim 12 (Withdrawn): The stain-proofing agent according to Claim 8, wherein the octane removal work calculated from the contact angle of octane in water, of a film formed from the stain-proofing agent, is less than 3.0×10^{-2} J/m².

Claim 13 (Withdrawn): A coating composition comprising a coating resin and the stain-proofing agent as defined in Claim 8.

Claim 14 (Withdrawn): The coating composition according to Claim 13, wherein the coating resin is a fluororesin.

Claim 15 (Withdrawn): The coating composition according to Claim 13, which further contains a crosslinking agent capable of crosslinking the stain-proofing agent.

Claim 16 (Withdrawn): A coated article having a coating film formed by using the coating composition as defined in Claim 13.

Claim 17 (New): A method of imparting stain proofing to an article comprising applying the stain-proofing agent according to Claim 1 thereto.

Claim 18 (New): A method of imparting stain proofing to an article comprising applying the stain-proofing agent according to Claim 2 thereto.

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Claim 19 (New): A method of imparting stain proofing to an article comprising applying the stain-proofing agent according to Claim 3 thereto.